Algerian Facebookers prefer English
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Abstract

So far, little is known about the use of English by Algerian netizens (users of Internet). The article intends to unveil the motivations behind the use of English for the design of Algerian Facebook groups. The study is based on mixed methods research as it combines both a quantitative and a qualitative method. It uses a descriptive statistical method to elicit sought data, then, adopts a Critical Discourse Analysis as a theoretical framework to interpret and explain the results obtained after the analysis of the questionnaire addressed to Algerian members of Facebook groups designed in English.

Keywords: English, anglicization, algerian netizens, facebook groups.

الفايسبوكرز الجزائرِيون يفضّلون اللّغة الانجليزيّة

ملخص

يأتي هذا المقال كمحاولة للكشف عن العوامل المحفّزة على استعمال اللغة الانجليزية لغرض تصميم مجموعات فايسبوك جزائرية لأن العديد من الأفراد لايزالون يجهلون لحد الآن الكثير عن موضوع استخدام متصفّحي الإنترنت الجزائرِيّين للّغة الانجليزيّة، إذ ترتكز هذه الدّراسة على مناهج البحث المختلطة بجمعها للمنهجين الكمّي والكيفيّ كما تستخدم منهجا إحصائيًا وصفيًا لاستنباط البيانات المطلوبة، ومن ثمّ تتبنّى إطارا نظريًا، يتجلّى في التّحليل النّقدي للخطاب، بغرض تفسير النتائج المتحصّل عليها وشرحها بعد تحليل الاستبيان المقدّم إلى الجزائرِيّين المنخرطين في مجموعات الفايسبوك المصمّمة باللّغة الانجليزيّة.

الكلمات المفاتيح: انجليزيّة، نكلزة، متصفّحي الإنترنت الجزائرِيّين، مجموعات فايسبوك.

Les Facebookers algériens préfèrent l'anglais

Résumé

Jusqu'à présent, nous savons peu de choses sur l'utilisation de l'anglais par les internautes algériens. L'article vise à dévoiler les motivations derrière l'utilisation de l'anglais pour la conception des groupes Facebook algériens. L'étude est basée sur des méthodes de recherche mixtes, car elle combine à la fois une méthode quantitative et une méthode qualitative. Elle utilise une méthode statistique descriptive pour obtenir des données recherchées, puis adopte une analyse critique du discours comme cadre théorique pour interpréter et expliquer les résultats obtenus après l'analyse du questionnaire adressé aux membres algériens de groupes Facebook conçus en anglais.

Mots-clés: Anglais, Anglicisation, internautes algériens, groupes Facebook.

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Introduction

Internet has revolutionized the way people communicate, think, socialize, act and do business, and even the way they perceive themselves and others. It has also provided them with more opportunities to evolve within their societies, and at the same time has favored cultural diversity by means of the exchanges. Incidentally, it has also imposed English as the favourite language of the World Wide Web. English, in fact, enables people across the world to communicate with one another and keeps them all well connected. Even Algerians who live in an environment which does not allow them direct access to real spoken or written English, start showing interest in using English in cyberspace.

The recent outburst of Algerians becoming active members of social networking communities like *Facebook,* has drawn our attention to the potential of such online social network to develop a sense of membership among people, to provide immediate and constructive educational feedback, and to offer the opportunity to interact with diverse contacts, ranging from members of the family, peers, teachers to native speakers of English. Presently, *Facebook* has become an integral part of their digital existence. Estimates, in fact, show that *Facebook* along with *You Tube* and *Google search* are the most popular websites among Algerian netizens[1]. Further on, *Facebook* allows Algerian netizens to reveal their deepest thoughts and fears as well as speak freely about personal emotional matters, but above all, it helps them learn and practise their English. This can be seen in particular in the growing number of Algerian *Facebook* groups designed in English.

It is important to note, however, that as far as the use of English by Algerians is concerned, there is relatively little thought directed towards the study of the Anglicization of Algerian netizens. Therefore, it appears worthy of investigation to find about what motivates Algerians to use English online, especially for the design of *Facebook* groups. The present study aims precisely at addressing this issue by investigating the overt and covert assumptions behind the use of English by Algerian netizens as the main language of communication for the design of *Facebook* groups. It is also the intention of the article to discuss Algerian netizens' conceptualization of culture so as to determine which culture (s) is/are more represented. This provides valuable insight about the attitudes of the members of these *Facebook* groups towards the intricate relationship between the local culture and the target language. To guide our investigation, the following questions are asked:

1) To what extent do Algerian netizens use English for the design of *Facebook* groups?
2) How do male and female Algerian netizens use Englishfor the design of *Facebook* groups?
3) Why do Algerian netizens use English as the main language of communication for the design of *Facebook* groups?
4) Which culture is most represented in Algerian *Facebook* groups designed in English?
5) Is *Facebook* a suitable environment for Algerians to learn and/or practise English?

1- Literature Review

The invention of Internet has dramatically affected communication and society everywhere. Its development, as Slevin asserts, signaled the coming of a new era in the history of cultural transmission[2]. It is the first unrestricted and least censored communication system that has ever been invented. Its use in Africa over the past few years has experienced a tremendous development. Its proliferation and the rapid adoption of ICTs, which encompass computers and mobile phones by Africans, have made real what Marshall McLuhan once called the '*Global Village*'[3]. In fact, Internet has definitely revolutionized the way people think and communicate, getting over temporal and spatial barriers and incidentally imposed English as the main language of Internet. One example frequently given is that a great majority of data available in cyberspace are in English. This does not need arguing because computer language, most of Litternet language, and the elaboration of most search engines were from the onset English-oriented.

1-1- English in Algeria

In Algeria, English is growing in reach and is affecting all spheres of social life. Indeed, there is an increasing use of English everyday in Algeria. At first sight out in the urban streets, for instance, we find a significant number of shop signs written in English in every street corner. Besides, the instructions on the packaging of some food products, including juice, milk and other items are written in English, in addition to Arabic and French.

Historically, English was first introduced into the Algerian linguistic landscape during World War Two, after the landing of American soldiers in the capital Algiers in November, 1942. These parachutists used the shores of Algiers as a military base for their operations against German soldiers.Being in face to face contact for their first time with Americans who only spoke in English, the locals, namely Algerois (people living in the city of Algiers), started to learn enough English to start small businesses, exchanging some goods with each other. This is how words such as *cigarettes*, *chewing-gum, whisky* and *business* had paved their way into the Algerian linguistic repertoire[4]. However, since the Independence of Algeria, Algerians have started learning English at school. Besides, as pointed out by Bouhadiba, the unprecedented socio-economic prosperity, which Algeria witnessed prior to the 1980s[5],resulted in the establishment of many multinational companies in Algeria such as BP Algeria, Petro Canada, First Calgary Petroleums Ltd and Medex Petroleum North Africa Ltd. And as it was in need of qualified workers to develop the oil/gas sector, a skilled labour force with English as its native language speakers arrived to Algeria.

The use of English in Algeria gained more importance between 1993 and 1997 partly because the Algerian government made considerable efforts to drop French in favour of English, in an attempt to retain foreign investment in Algeria and attract new ones from developed countries but also to cope with the demand of Islam-conservatives, who clearly stated that French in Algeria should be replaced by English[6]. Hence, parents had for the first time the option of choosing English as the chief foreign language for their children entering fourth grade, displacing French in the process. However, only 10% of parents did choose English, for which the teaching conditions were unsuitable[7]. Zaboot considers this initiative as being a governmental attempt to position English as the direct "*rival*" of French, so as to bring the language of the colonizer to an end[8].

In 1996, the results of a survey on language preferences were made public by the Ministry of Education. These demonstrated that the majority of parents (71%) preferred their children to learn French instead of English (29%). Also, around 52% of the group of teachers polled refused this switch[9]. Being unsuccessful, this political initiative was dropped by the end of the 1990s, and as a consequence, French retained its prestigious status and continued to be taught in Primary School as the only foreign language.

In present day Algeria, English is taught from the first year of Middle School and throughout the Secondary School as the second foreign language after French[10]. It is also studied in universities, mainly in English departments, higher national schools, and in private schools following the presidential decree passed by the Parliament on 23 August 2005. As to the making of textbooks, the introduction of new technologies and the training of teachers of English, Algeria is highly cooperating with the USA and Canada to improve the Algerian educational system[11]. In accordance with this, the "*Direct American Support*" is a US programme which offers partnership to the universities of Annaba and Ouargla, providing training to teachers and assisting doctoral studies as well as centres for the development of careers. What is more, the Ministry of education has recently come to an agreement with the British Council to provide training in English to teachers and inspectors in order to improve the level and quality of the English language courses in Algeria[12].

Apart from education, the oil and gas industry in Algeria remains a sector where proficiency in English is extremely valued. According to Euromonitor, an independent and privately owned global research organization, the average gap salary between someone who can speak English and someone who cannot is close to 10%[13]. This motivates young

Algerians to learn English, driven by awareness that English offers improved chances for recruitment with multinational companies, which usually offer better salaries and the opportunity to travel abroad. Furthermore, only 7% of the population speaks English to an intermediate level[14]. This is a quite low level in comparison to the use of Berber, Arabic, and French. The majority of these speakers live in the North. This includes cities like the capital Algiers, Constantine, Oran and Annaba, where most businesses are located. Yet, the increasing demand for English speaking skills in the south, due to the presence of multinational facilities in Hassi R'mel and Hassi Messaoud, is likely to change the situation. This trend is already visible in cyberspace where the number of Algerian *Facebook* groups, which use English as the main language of communication, is increasing significantly. Internet, in fact, plays an important role in promoting English in Algeria.

1-2- Internet in Algeria

Internet in Algeria has known a low connection speed and penetration rate for many years. This can be attributed to several economic, cultural and political factors, including poor quality service and high cost of computers and Internet subscription. Yet, the government has made considerable effort in upgrading, organizing, developing and expanding both national and international networks in order to meet the needs of Algerian netizens (users of Internet)[15]. These developments, for instance, include the expansion of international band with, the use of new submarine, terrestrial and satellite links, the launch of 3G and 4G mobile services, the introduction of optical fiber networks, the reduction of Internet subscription prices…Overall, the developments undertaken serve one end: provide Algerian netizens with a better Internet quality in order to increase its penetration rate by spreading it out to a wider and varied population.

Accordingly, over the past two decades, the number of Algerian netizens has greatly increased, from 50.000 in 2000 to approximately18.580.000 netizens in June 2017[16]. By the end of March 2017, the total number of subscribers to both the fixed and mobile Internet attained 33.815.000 while it counted 29.538.000 subscribers in 2016.This is an increase of 4.280.000 subscribers. The Minister of Post and Information and Communication Technologies, Houda Imen Faraoun, ascribes this significant growth to the migration of GSM subscribers to 3G and 4G networks[17]. And according to a survey conducted by *Ericson Consumer lab*, this growth can also be ascribed to the net increase of Smartphone holders, which rose from 27% in 2014 to 68% in 2016, the availability of tablets in households, which increased from 21% in 2014 to 58% in 2016, and the expansion of fixed lines, which attained 64% in 2016[18].

In February 2017, *IMMAR Research and Consultancy*, a French company of computer engineering services, conducted a survey which reported that the use of Internet by region was fairly homogenous. Accordingly, 49% of Algerian netizens are located in the Eastern Region, followed by the Center with 46%, and then, the West and South Regions with 44% each. The survey also indicated that 50% of urban dwellers accessed the Internet daily compared to only 29% of rural dwellers. And according to the same study, 77% of Algerians aged between fifteen and twenty-four, 55% of those whose age ranges between twenty-five to thirty-four years old, 32% of those who are between thirty-five and forty-four years old, 21% of those aged between forty-five and fifty-four, and 17% of those who are fifty-five years old, tend to surf on Internet every day[19].

Actually, a relatively high-speed access to Internet and a rather appreciable broadband offer Algerians the opportunity to experience netizenship. This may, for instance, include the discovery and sharing of culture and knowledge, the achievement of commercial success and quality learning/practising opportunities of foreign languages, especially English, because as was previously mentioned, Algerians, do not live in an environment which allows them direct access to real spoken or written English except at school or through the screens of their computers. In particular, the expansion of *Facebook*, offers Algerian netizens the possibility to learn, practise and improve their English level as they are in contact with native speakers

and/or other Algerian netizens who share the same ambition. This is already happening and can be seen in particular in the increasing number of Algerian *Facebook* groups designed in English.

Like *Google*, *Facebook* is perhaps one of the Internet major applications since the advent of the WWW. This social network is one of the most visited and the fastest growing website on the Internet in all history[20]. Estimates, in fact, show that *Facebook* along *You Tube* and *Google search* are the most popular websites among Algerian users of the Internet[21]. In December 2012, for instance, *Facebook* topped the ranking with nearly 4.111.320 users[22]. In less than four years, this number quite tripled in January 2016 as it reached approximately 12.100.000 subscribers, which represents (31%) of the Algerian population according to a study conducted by *Medianet*, a Tunisian company of computer engineering services[23]. By the end of June 2017, this number attained around 19.000.000 subscribers, representing (45.2%) of the population. Algeria is presently the second African country with the highest number of *Facebook* subscribers, the ranking being dominated by the Egyptians with 35.000.000 users[24]. These growing numbers compel us to study in depth why more and more Algerian netizens design Facebook groups using English as their main language of communication.

2- Research Techniques and Methodology

As mentioned earlier, this study is first and foremost concerned with the investigation of what motivates Algerian netizens to use English as the main language of communication for the design of *Facebook.* The main reason for focusing on this theme is driven by our profound desire to understand the propensity of Algerians to express themselves in English in a virtual context, and in order to achieve our goal, we opt for a Mixed Methods Research, where quantitative and qualitative are combined for data collection and data analysis.

2-1-Data Collection Procedure

Ninety (90) Algerian *Facebook* groups designed in English were selected randomly over a one-year period from June 2015 to May 2016. Then, the groups were classified according to their most recurrent themes such as business, sport, education, news, economy, health…For the quantitative part, we designed a questionnaire (see **Appendix I**), and then, addressed it to a group of sixty-four (64) Algerian netizens using English through *Facebook* groups. The dissemination of the questionnaire was made online and circulated individually to every designer of the 90*Facebook* groups, which were previously selected. Our choice of an online questionnaire is motivated by the instant response time it provides for the researcher. Results are gathered automatically and are ready to be analyzed at any time. This reduces greatly the margin of error and research costs. Besides, we used a descriptive statistical method to generate statistical data in order to make the analysis of row data easier.

2-2- Data Analysis Procedure

Data was analyzed and interpreted qualitatively in relation to our research questions. Specifically, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) appears to be the most relevant approach to interpret and explain qualitatively the results obtained because, as Van Djik argues, CDA is a state of mind or an attitude of analyzing a text critically[25]. That is, it examines the relationship between texts and the social context in which they occur[26], and thus, investigates issues relating to gender, ethnicity, identity and many other types of discrimination, showing how such issues are both constructed and reflected in texts. In sum, CDA aims at revealing underlying ideologies, challenging particular biases and presuppositions from the linguistic features of a text[27].

3- Results

To cater for the readability of the results and the research output, the data is grouped under four thematic headings: classification of Algerian *Facebook* groups designed in English, identification of participants in terms of age, gender, educational level and present occupation, general attitudes of Algerian netizens using English in *Facebook* groups, and participants' evaluation of the cultural elements prevailing in *Facebook* groups designed in English.

3-1- Classification of Algerian Facebook Groups designed in English

The current study found out that out of ninety Algerian *Facebook* groups designed in English, twenty-three were concerned with questions related to the category '*Teachers of English*'(25.5%). Eighteen to the category '*Practice of English*'(20%).Thirteen to the category '*University Matters*'(14.45%) and twelve to the category '*Learning of English*' (13.3%). A significant number of groups, in fact, favours the teaching/ learning of English. The remaining groups tend to prefer themes such as '*Religion*, '*Fun*', '*Politics*', '*Tests and Exams*', '*Academic Research*', and '*Business*'.
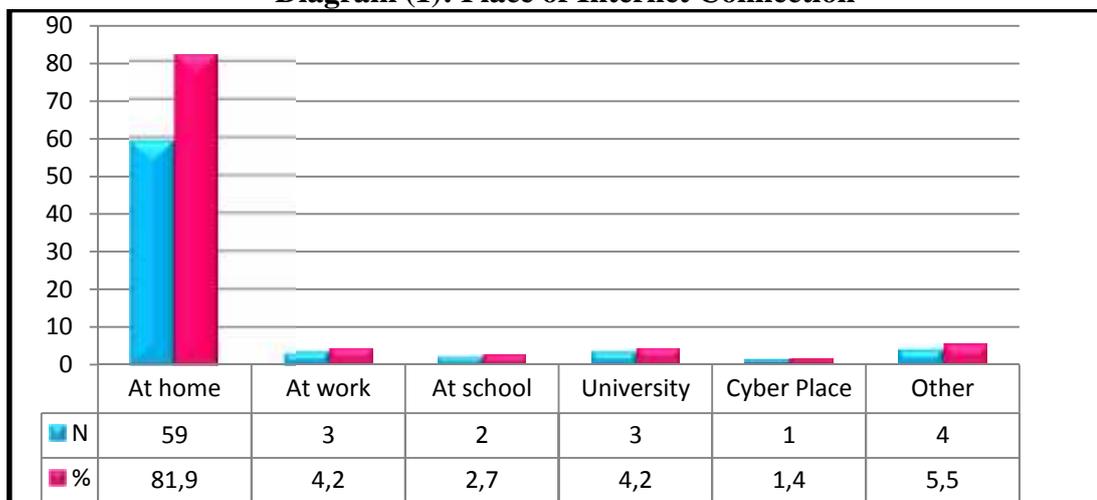
3-2-Identification of Participants in Terms of Age, Gender, Educational Level and Present Occupation

The analysis of the questionnaire revealed that the great majority of the participants surveyed are aged between fifteen and thirty-four years. It also demonstrated that the target group is largely unbalanced in terms of gender distribution, displaying a significant prominence of females over males. That is, thirty-nine (61%) out of sixty-four respondents are females. Besides, nearly all the respondents have a high level of education. Among this population, 25 respondent shold a '*Bachelor of Arts Degree*', 23 respondent shold a '*Master/Magister Degree*', and 08 respondents hold a '*PhD Degree*'. As concerns their present occupation, the results obtained show that most of them are either '*Students*' or '*Teachers of English*'. Interestingly, two participants said that they were '*Doctors*' while two others replied that they were '*University Lecturers*'.

3-3- General Attitudes of Algerian Netizens using English in *Facebook* Groups

When the participants were asked how often and from where they surfed on the web, nearly all of them responded that they connected to the Internet '*at home*' (81.9%) and on a'*Daily Basis*' (93.7%). See diagrams 1 and 2 below.

Diagram (1): Place of Internet Connection

	At home	At work	At school	University	Cyber Place	Other
N	59	3	2	3	1	4
%	81,9	4,2	2,7	4,2	1,4	5,5

Diagram (2): Internet Frequency Use

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly
N	60	4	0
%	93,75	6,25	0
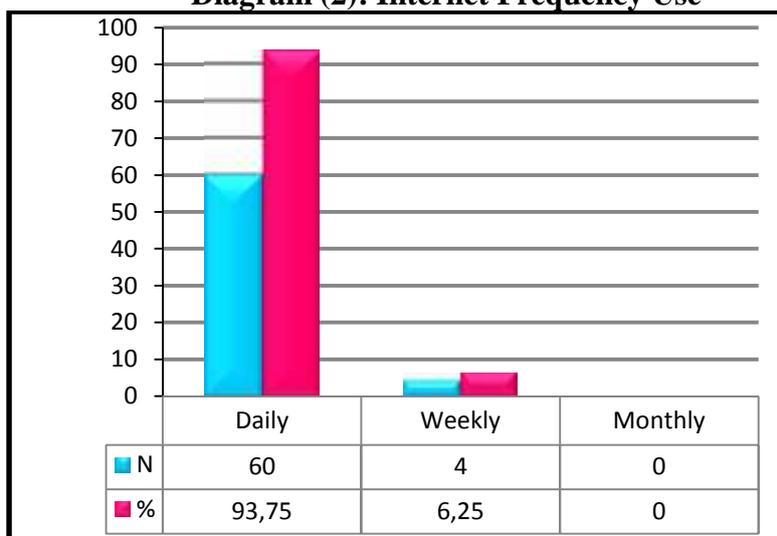
Fifty-two participants said that they had been using *Facebook* for a period ranging from four to eight years. Their frequency rate of use of *Facebook* ranges from one hour to more than four hours. It is important to note that one of the participants reported that he remained connected on *Facebook* almost "*All Day*" while two others responded that the time spent on *Facebook* depended on their '*Mood*'. Hence, they could spend all day long on *Facebook* or merely one hour. As concerns the target people with whom they communicate, the majority of the respondents, as clearly shown in diagram 3 below, indicated that they conversed either with their '*Friends*' (33.7 %) or with '*Family Members*'(16.9%).
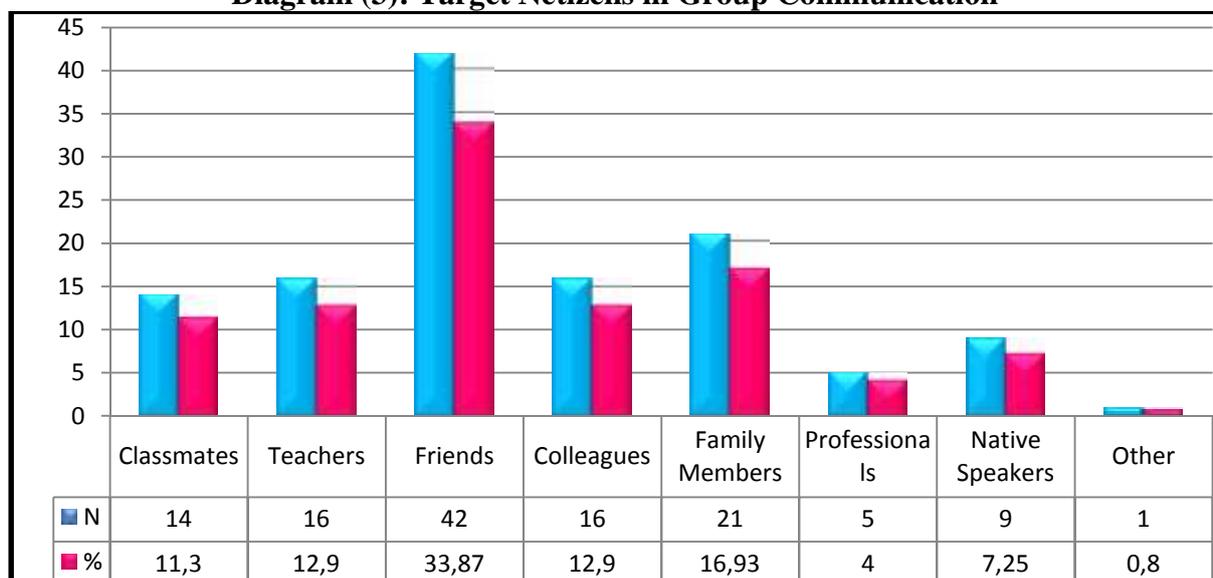
Diagram (3): Target Netizens in Group Communication

	Classmates	Teachers	Friends	Colleagues	Family Members	Professionals	Native Speakers	Other
N	14	16	42	16	21	5	9	1
%	11,3	12,9	33,87	12,9	16,93	4	7,25	0,8

The explanations advanced by the respondents to justify their use of English as the main language of communication in *Facebook* groups are various. They relate to five main aspects: learning English, practising and improving English, expressing oneself, substituting French for English and speaking with natives (see **Appendix II**).

Regarding the participants' attitudes towards the learning process of English via *Facebook* groups, two-thirds of the respondents surveyed (65.5%) think that the use of *Facebook* groups can help them learn English effectively. The remaining participants (34.4%) expressed an opposite view. Diagram 4 below displays the visual representation of the results.

Diagram (4): Learning English via Facebook Groups
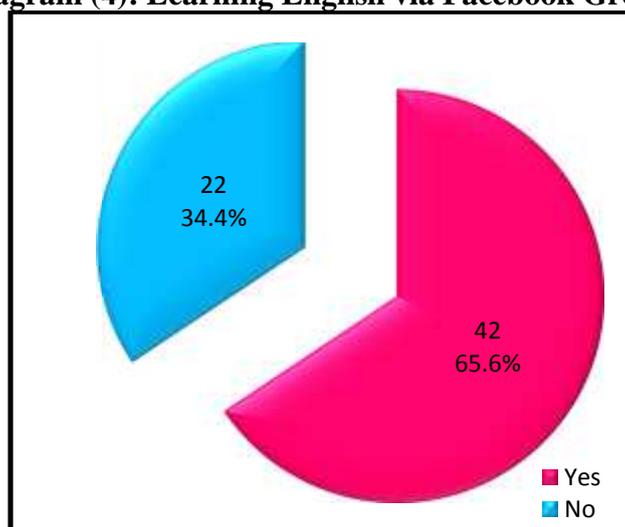
'*Vocabulary*' has been largely distinguished by the respondents as being the most important component of language to be learnt within *Facebook* groups designed in English. Yet, more than half of the participants considered the use of English in *Facebook* groups '*Useful*' for learning the different structural aspects of English. They strongly believe that *Facebook* can provide them with a rich and comprehensive linguistic content that facilitates the learning of these structural aspects as they are presented with interesting themes.

Besides using English for learning the language itself, the results obtained indicate that most of the respondents also used English for other purposes, including '*Fun*', '*Sharing Knowledge and Experiences*', but also, '*Meeting New People*', '*Being up to Date*', '*Organizing Events', 'Promoting English Worldwide*' and '*Expressing oneself*'.

Another important finding concerns the participants' attitudes towards the use of English and its speakers. A significant percentage of respondents 64% affirmed that they did encourage positive attitudes because English is a universal language.

3-4-Participants' Evaluation of the Cultural Elements Prevailing in *Facebook* Groups designed in English.

As far as the cultural elements prevailing in *Facebook* groups are concerned, nearly half of the participants, who took part in the survey, reported that they portrayed more elements of '*International Cultures*'. Eighteen out of sixty-one participants also depicted the local culture. One respondent argued that the target culture does not matter as long as it helped learning English while another one said that the cultural elements prevailing in the content of *Facebook* groups depended on the information one choses to transmit. See diagram 5 below for a visual representation of the results.

Diagram (5): Cultural Elements Prevailing in the Content of Algerian Facebook Groups

	Algerian Culture	American Culture	British Culture	Other English-Speaking Cultures	International Cultures	other
▪ N	18	3	3	1	31	5
▪ %	29,03	4,84	4,84	1,61	50	8,06
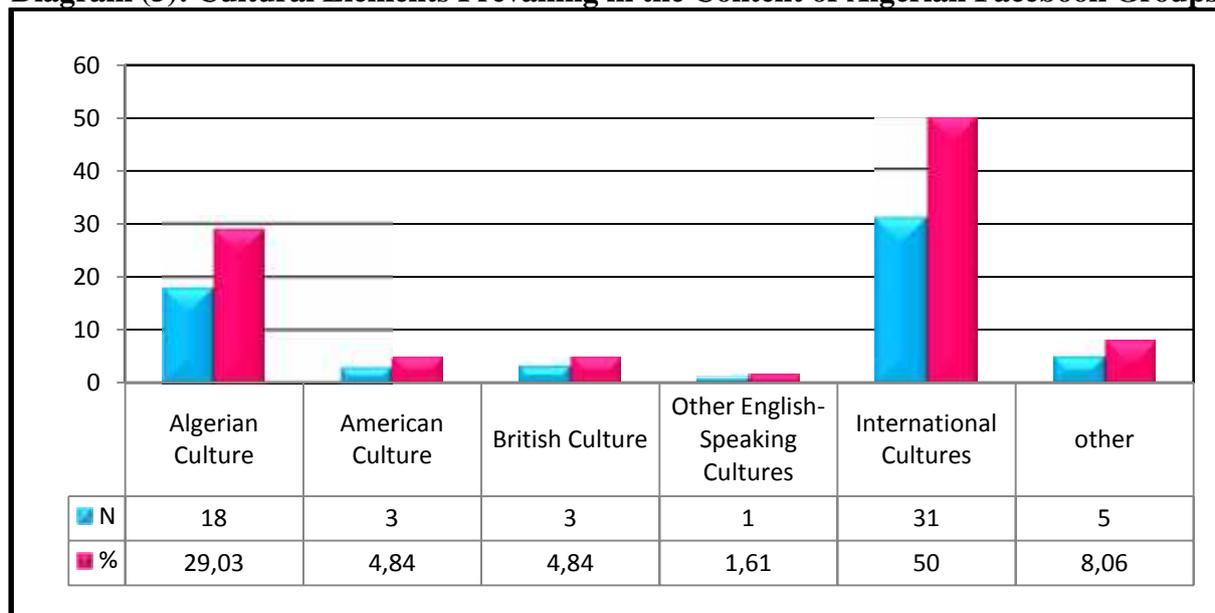
These participants do not seem to favour cultural contents such as '*Customs and Traditions'* and '*Politics*'. They rather portray contents relating to '*Behaviours and Lifestyles*' as well as '*Social Values and Norms'*. The following ranking of the different aspects was provided:

1) Behaviours and life styles,

2) Social values and norms,

3) General information about history and social institutions/ literary works and fine arts (music, dancing, paintings…),

4) Shared practices,

5) And finally, scientific achievements and discoveries.

Another pertinent issue is the participants' point of view as to what constitutes an interesting *Facebook* group designed in English. Accordingly, an interesting Algerian *Facebook* group designed in English is one which contains a balanced range of cultural elements of '*universal themes*' (41.41%) and both' *the local and foreign cultures'*(35.35%), and a much reduced amount of the '*English culture*' (8.08%).It is worth noting that two respondents argued that an interesting *Facebook* group was one that dealt with '*Fun*' while another one preferred those portraying '*Religious Matters*' and another one tended to favour those dealing with '*Teaching Issues'*.

4- Discussion

This study helps us gain a deeper intellectual understanding as to what extent and why English matters in the design of Algerian *Facebook* groups, and therefore, determine the extent to which the Algerian society is affected by Globalization; that is, worldwide integration and interaction between cultures. Based on our findings, there appears to be a growing interest in the use of English online and if things continue evolving this way, English may, in the long run, and most probably in the digital context, threaten the status of French in Algeria. According to the results of the study, the Algerian youth are aware of the importance of the English language. It is a language that fascinates them, and which, they are keen to learn and master purposefully to use it in science, business and technology not only in *Facebook* groups, but in real life contexts as well.

This increasing use of social activity in English in Algeria is a good initiative towards a better mastery of the language because the more Algerians are in contact with English, even if it is only in cyberspace, the more effective that language is acquired. Yet, its level and degree of usage remains confined to the literate elite, which includes mainly teachers of English, university lecturers, students and doctors. It is, therefore, our responsibility to call for its use

in everyday situation because knowing English in the globalized world is an essential asset to progressing forward and communicating with people overseas.

As far as the frequency use of *Facebook* is concerned, it appeared that *Facebook* has become one of, if not, the main online means of expression for Algerian netizens to make their voices heard beyond seas. Although *Facebook* takes them into a different world away from the bustle of day-to-day life, Algerian netizens are often reluctant and afraid to open up to the unknown. For instance, communication via *Facebook* is mainly restricted to friends and family members. This reflects mixed feelings towards the use of *Facebook* and can be ascribed to societal, religious and political reasons. It may be argued that living in an environment in which religion plays an important role in shaping identities, social and individual practices and moral positions, does not favour the creation of links with foreigners. This explains why only a small number of participants (7.2%) converse with native speakers having a different religion.

Interestingly, females are involved more actively than their male counterparts in *Facebook* groups designed in English. This can be explained by the fact that Algerian women live in a society that is bound by traditions and religion. This forces them to withhold their emotions and repress their feelings in public. Taken as a whole, *Facebook* offers them a loophole to escape their routine and daily life. Being online, in fact, offers them the opportunity to take their masks off and express themselves more freely. Using English as the main language of communication through *Facebook* groups helps them assert themselves as accomplished and totally fulfilled women, whether they are educated housewives or working women.

This study also revealed that Algerian netizens use English in *Facebook* groups not only to learn the language itself, but also for other purposes, mainly entertainment, meeting new people, expressing oneself and being up to date. Actually, Algerian netizens using English in *Facebook* groups are aware of the importance of knowing English, the international language of business, diplomacy, science and technology. Linguistically, this interest in English can be attributed to the fact that it is a simple and relatively easy language to learn, as compared to French. English, as Steele-Gordon explains, has no gender distinction, no complex morphology and no tone system[28]. What is more, the popularity of books, TV shows, films and songs in English makes it readily available and easy to practise[29].

As concerns the attitudes of the participants towards the use of English and its speakers, they are positive. Indeed, of the fifty-one participants who completed the questionnaire, nearly all of them (94%) replied that they encouraged positive attitudes towards English and its speakers. Only six percent expressed an opposite view. This reflects the disposition of Algerian netizens towards learning English. It also creates a positive learning environment where group members would feel comfortable, safe and engaged, focusing only on the positive aspects of learning. Thus, they would be more likely self-motivated and more open to actively stimulate the discussion and encourage the exchange of views. Nevertheless, respondents did not give much importance to the representation of the target culture. Rather, they largely portrayed the Algerian culture. This mirrors the current foreign language policy in Algerian, an educational policy which tends to favour the learning of English but neglects the importance of learning about the target culture and people, which usually facilitates the learning and understanding of the target language. This also proves that the Algerian society is not wholly affected by globalization. That is, even if they are actively using English in cyberspace via *Facebook* groups, this does not mean they will adopt the target culture and forget about their own. This is why the cultural traits portrayed in Algerian *Facebook* groups designed in English relate principally to behaviours and life styles, in addition to social norms and values. All these factors bound Algerian netizens together and regulate their thinking and behaving.

These groups are also inclined to learn vocabulary in particular. This is due to the fact that the majority of Algerians are accustomed to learn foreign languages through the mastery of their vocabulary. Actually, a thorough knowledge of vocabulary provides a solid foundation

for how well one speaks, listens, reads and writes. This tendency also offers one additional asset to better communicate with strangers since, as Thornbury explains (2002), the more words one knows, the more flexible s/he will be in thinking[30]. In addition, Algerian *Facebook* groups designed in English provide their members with a diversified range of activities of which the content is rich and comprehensive, as far as linguistic and general knowledge are concerned, which stimulates their communicative skills. All in all, such groups could be the ideal place for English learners. *Facebook* has, in fact, a huge international community, and thus, one may join a discussion in English with just a few words and end up having interesting debates resulting in many pages of comments. The asynchronous mode of communication gives the members as much time as they need to decide exactly what they want to say and which vocabulary to use. They can check and double-check their grammar and spelling before they post anything. These groups also provide the learners with helpful tips and videos, exercises, advice, lessons, and information about learning English. And within a few months, one will certainly start noticing a considerable amount of improvement in her/his understanding, writing and the ease of communication.

Conclusion

The findings we have reached throughout our investigation confirm that the use of English in Algeria is increasing inexorably, especially in cyberspace as *Facebook* groups designed in English are emerging every day. These groups offer Algerian netizens the possibility to express their deepest thoughts and feelings freely, share knowledge, exchange information, meet new people, have fun and be up to date. What is more, these groups provide users with the opportunity for interacting with local netizens, who, just like them, are keen on learning and practising English. Based on the results of this study, *Facebook* lends itself as a useful tool to learn, practise and improve Algerians' level of English because of the scarcity of opportunities that are offered to them to use English outside English classes at school. Interestingly, this online use of English is not completely a matter of being part of the globalized world because even if Algerian netizens, especially the young generation, are fond of using English in *Facebook* groups, it does not mean that they neglect their culture. It is quite the opposite, as they use English to make their culture known overseas. Moreover, such use of English is also a claim for an updated reform of the Algerian linguistic policy, through their awareness of the importance of English as an international language of business, diplomacy, science and technology. The Algerian netizens surveyed in this study express their need for English to be the first foreign language in Algeria in the future. All in all, this study has proven that a change in the Algerian educational policy is necessary to cope with the increasing demand of English use.

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Appendices:
Appendix I: The Questionnaire

I. *Demographic Details about the Participants*

- **Age**

15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+

- **Gender**

Male	
Female	

- **Educational Level**

a)　Middle School　　　　　　　☐

b)　Secondary School　　　　　　☐

c)   Bachelor of Arts Degree   ☐
d)   Master/ Magister Degree   ☐
e)   PhD Degree   ☐
f)   Other, specify……………………………………………………………………………….
- **What is your present occupation?**

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

II.   *Questions*
Please answer the questions by ticking off the boxes and complete spaces whenever necessary.
1.   *How often do you use the Internet?*
a)   On a regular basis ☐

                        Specify: Daily   ☐
Weekly   ☐
 Monthly   ☐
b)   Rarely   ☐
2.   Where do you use the Internet?
a)   At home   ☐
b)   At work   ☐
c)   At school   ☐
d)   University   ☐
e)   Cyber Place   ☐
f)   Other, specify:………………………………………………………………………
3.   How long have you been using Facebook?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
4.   How much time do you approximately spend on Facebook per day?
a)   Up to half an hour   ☐
b)   Around one hour   ☐
c)   From 2 to 4hours   ☐
d)   More than 4 hours   ☐
e)   None   ☐
f)   Other, specify……………………………………………………………………
5.   With whom do you communicate through Facebook groups?
a)   Classmates   ☐
b)   Teachers   ☐
c)   Friends   ☐
d)   Colleagues   ☐
e)   Family Members   ☐
f)   Professionals   ☐
g)   Native Speakers   ☐
h)   Other, specify:……………………………………………………………………………
6.   Could you explain why do you use English in cyberspace while you live in an environment which does not allow you direct access to real spoken or written English?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
7.   Do you think that Facebook groups designed in English can help you learn the English language effectively?
a)   Yes   ☐
b)   No   ☐
8.   If yes, what can you learn within Facebook groups using English?
    I can learn:
a)   Vocabulary   ☐
b)   Reading   ☐
c)   Writing   ☐
d)   Listening   ☐
e)   Speaking   ☐
f)   All   ☐
9.   How can you qualify the use of English within Algerian Facebook groups?
a)   Important   ☐
b)   Necessary   ☐

c)   Useful   ☐
d)   Misleading   ☐
e)   Restricting   ☐

10.   In your Facebook group, do you use English for other purposes like fun, prestige, being up to date…etc?
a)   Yes   ☐
b)   No   ☐

11.   If yes, what are these purposes?
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

12.   In your Facebook groups, do you encourage positive attitude towards the use of English and its speakers?
a)   Yes   ☐
b)   No   ☐

13.   If yes, why do you do so?
I do encourage positive attitude towards the use of English and its speakers in my Facebook group because...

14.   Which cultural elements prevail in the content of your Facebook group?
a)   Algerian Culture   ☐
b)   American Culture   ☐
c)   British Culture   ☐
d)   Other English-speaking Cultures (African, Indian, Australian…)   ☐
e)   International Cultures   ☐
f)   Other, specify………………………………………………………………………..

15.   What do the cultural content of your Facebook pages portray?
a)   Customs and traditions   ☐
b)   Social values and norms   ☐
c)   General information about history and social institutions   ☐
d)   Literary works and fine arts (music, dancing, paintings…   ☐
e)   Behaviours and life styles   ☐
f)   Scientific achievements and discoveries   ☐
g)   Politics   ☐
h)   Shared practices   ☐
i)   Other, specify………………………………………………………………………..

16.   According to you, an interesting Algerian Facebook group designed in English is one (You can choose more than one answer):
a)   Which includes elements dealing with the Algerian culture   ☐
b)   Which includes elements dealing with the English culture   ☐
c)   Which includes elements dealing with both the local and foreign cultures   ☐
d)   Which includes elements dealing with universal themes   ☐
e)   Other, specify……………………………………………………………………….

17.   Please, feel free to add any comments or remarks that might help this study.
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

I do thank you foryour useful cooperation!

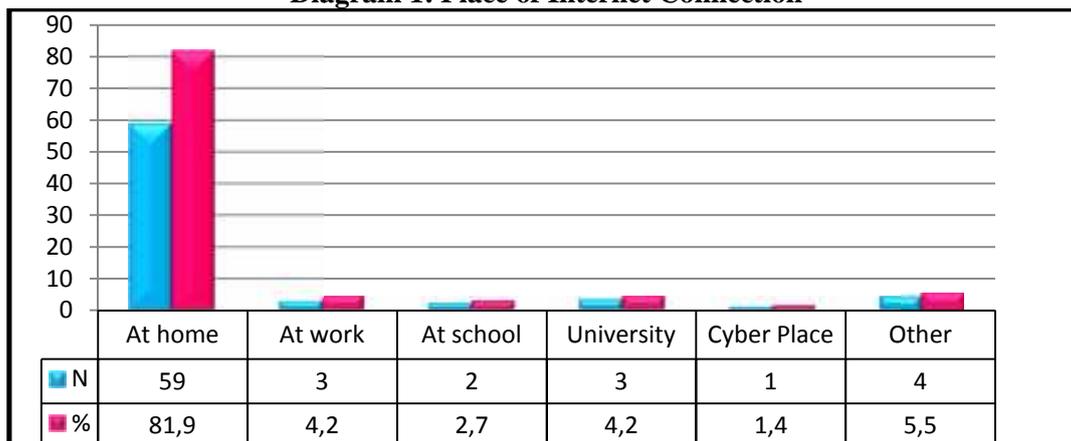## Appendix II: Respondents' Opinions

•   ***Participant 1:*** "*My aim is to progress and look for ways and techniques to develop and help in the learning process.*"

•   ***Participant 2:*** "*I like to use English most often with my friends to stay acquainted with its use and improve my level.*"

•   ***Participant 3:***"*Through the use of English I can explain myself even more! My thoughts, ideas, oh and especially my feelings! I don't know why >>, it's just easier to me!? More like art, English is a way to express the self, huh?*"

•   ***Participant 4:*** *My hatred toward "French '!! I HATE FRENCH! My entire life I felt paralyzed: / just because I don't know French, I was a loser in the sight of our community. There I promised myself to prove them wrong, to achieve something bigger then this stupid French -and these small minds.-!so I learn English - I'm still in the beginning- all this all, means something to me,why people can't just seem to understand we are better off without French .. ^^ finally English now is the*

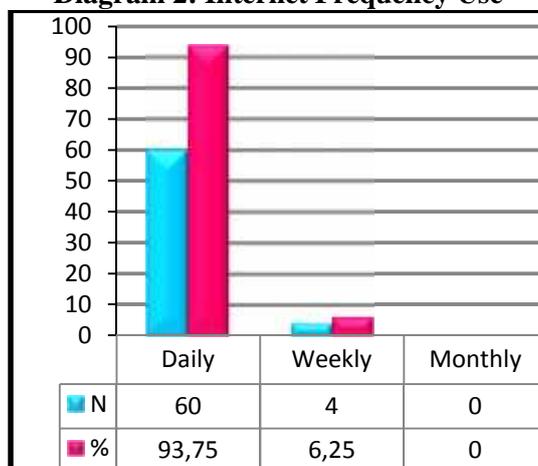*worldwide language spread -_- like come on!! If u want to survive in this world u got to keep up, right?"*

-      ***Participant 5:*** *"To speak with native speakers though I am living in a non-native community."*
-      ***Participant 6:*** *"Just to help people practice their English."*
-      ***Participant 7:*** *"English is part of my immediate environment as a student and a teacher of English I chat with friends and colleagues who speak English as well. Thus it's easy and fun. It's easy to post or share any interesting la link in English (for fun or for info)."*
-      ***Participant 8:*** *"Through the use of English I can explain myself even more! My thoughts, ideas, oh and especially my feelings! I don't know why >>, it's just easier to me!? More like art, English is a way to express the self, huh?"*
-      ***Participant 9:*** *"To speak with native speakers though I am living in a non-native community."*

Appendix III: List of Diagrams

Diagram 1: Place of Internet Connection

	At home	At work	At school	University	Cyber Place	Other
N	59	3	2	3	1	4
%	81,9	4,2	2,7	4,2	1,4	5,5

Diagram 2: Internet Frequency Use

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly
N	60	4	0
%	93,75	6,25	0

Diagram 3: Target Netizens in Group Communication

	Classmates	Teachers	Friends	Colleagues	Family Members	Professionals	Native Speakers	Other
N	14	16	42	16	21	5	9	1
%	11,3	12,9	33,87	12,9	16,93	4	7,25	0,8
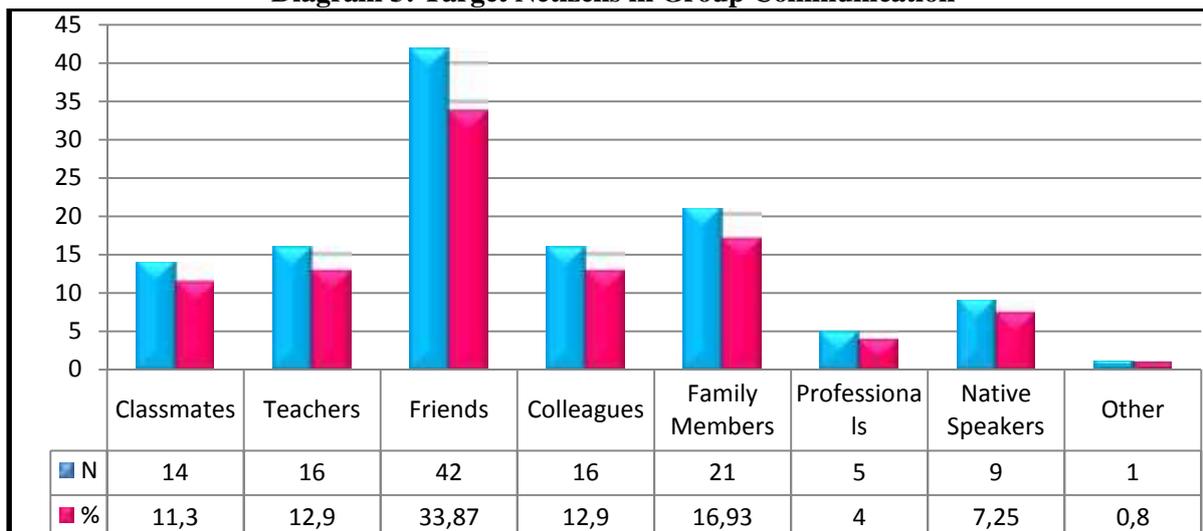
Diagram 4: Learning English via Facebook Groups

Diagram 5: Cultural Elements Prevailing in the Content of Algerian Facebook Groups

	Algerian Culture	American Culture	British Culture	Other English-Speaking Cultures	International Cultures	other
N	18	3	3	1	31	5
%	29,03	4,84	4,84	1,61	50	8,06